

Vincent Saldana
Mr. Anders
Period 6
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Jessica Saldana is an Asian-American woman who was born in Tacoma Washington. She is a mother of 4 and she works as one of the managers for a Kroger store. I interviewed my mother to see what her early life was like as someone who moved around a lot. This interview was recorded on an iPhone 12 Pro Max voice memo app.

V: All right. Hello.

M: Hello

V: I'm with...

M: Jessica Saldana

V: All right, can you describe your childhood?

M: Yes, um, I had a good childhood. I uh, I'm an only child, so at times it was lonely. I did have a step brother, so when I lived with my dad, um, I got the, um, the feeling of having a sibling. But when I was living with my mom, it was lonely, not having, um, any siblings at all. UM So that kind of got the best of both worlds.

(The complete opposite to my sibling's and I childhood. We had always grew up around each other and the feeling of loneliness was never apparent for us)

V: Mhm Being the only child and having a sibling when you when you wanted?

M: yeah, part time on both. It was kind of nice, um, the I stayed with one paren't just long enough to get tired of it, of having a sibling, then got to go back to my mom and, um, experience being lonely, and then got tired of that, and then got to move back with my dad. So it was a lot back and forth growing up, but I did have a good childhood I feel like.

V: yeah Can you elaborate, you said you, um, when you lived with your your dad, and when you lived with your mom, can you elaborate on that, that living situation?

M: Yeah. So, my parents divorced when I was a year and a half, my dad was in the military and my mom was from Korea, so in my younger years, she was back and forth from Korea more than a

couple times. So during those time frames where she was in Korea, I lived with my dad. And with my dad being in the military, we were all over. For instance, when I was in kindergarten, I went to school in Germany. And then, um, my dad came back to the United States., and my mom came back to the United States, and, um, I lived on the East Coast when I was from 1st grade through, I think it was 5th grade. And then I went to school, 6th grade, in California, and went back to the East Coast for a little bit. And then, um, can end up moving back, moving to Washington. Went to school for a little bit in Washington, then I went finished a high school in California, so I was kind of all over the place, um, growing up, bouncing back and forth between my parents. And I got to experience school on both sides of the coast, or both sides of the US, and, um, yeah, a different family life at that. My dad remarry, and, um, I had a, like I said, I had a step sibling. And then my mom remarried, but didn't have any more children, didn't have any stepchildren. And she actually ended up going through two divorces, um, besides my dad, she got married three times and and divorced three times, and, um, yeah, so I got kind of all different kind of upbringings.

V: Yeah, um, how did I feel like friend wise? Was it hard to make friends? And like keep friends when you're moving around like that?

M: when you're young, it's never really hard to make friends. I don't feel like, um, it is hard to maintain friendships, long term friendships. Um. When I did live with my mom, my mom moved. Every year, we moved to a different location, pretty much, so every year I went to a different school. I didn't get to maintain the same elementary school more than one school year. UM Middle school. I went to three different middle schools. UM and um high school. Once I got to high school, I was a little more stable, I ended up living with my dad. UM I actually went to three different high schools as well. UM But, and I didn't really keep contact with any of my friends growing up until I got to high school, and I went to one school a lot longer than one school year. I still maintain relationships with, um, some people that I was friends with in high school, but as far as middle school and elementary school now, yeah, so like when you when you settle down more, was kind of easier to maintain those friendships and stuff?

V: Yes, yeah. All right, moving on... What was a childhood moment that you were still proud of today? Maybe something you accomplished, or something that just kind of stuck with you that either you're proud of or just made you happy childhood accomplish, either childhood, like pre teen, or like teen, um,

M: I would say, um, I don't, actually I don't know if you know this or not, but I from bouncing around so much academically, I struggled a lot. Um, I think math was my only subject that I was actually good in. Everything else. I struggled history, english, UM. I had a hard time. I didn't have very good study habits. UM And academically from pretty young age, I struggled. And it wasn't until I got to high school. UM, and I ended up becoming pregnant my senior year with Jose your brother. And, um, I ended up moving schools because of that, because I was so sick when I was pregnant in my early pregnancy that I missed so much school, and on top of already having poor grades and not very good study habits. So they moved me schools, and I went to a school that supported me, um a little bit more academically. Um was able to accommodate some of the problems that I was having, and I was able to graduate high school, which I probably honestly, if I wouldn't have moved schools, and I wouldn't have been able to graduate high school on time, and

probably even at all. Yes, I mean, honest So buckling down, knowing that I was going to have a kid, and knowing that, hey, I have to get serious about this. Because me having a kid, it was vital for me to be able to graduate high school and eventually go on to college and get a degree. Um, I had to get my butt in gear, more or less.

(My mothers pregnancy with my brother was talked about between members of her side of her family as my father's race and my brothers future name became a centerpiece of controversy.)

And I am proud of that.

That is probably one of the biggest, that is the biggest accomplishment in my adolescence years, was making sure that I graduated high school, and kind of changing years within my senior year.

V: And so like kind of getting ready to take care of a child as well as taking care of your school stuff?

M: Yes, yeah. So it was just different motivation that, um, that got me to change, and I am proud of that change.

V: What was I like taking care of a child being, what, 18, still in school?

M: UM, it was frightening. It was frightening because I didn't have a lot of baby experience, and, um, it's a lot of responsibility. and I did have a support system, but it wasn't, um, it, it just wasn't an ideal situation for having a kid. Yeah, it was. It was scary.

V: Is there like, a example that just really, just, like, still, you think about, like, wow, like, this is real life I'm taking care of a kid like a specific time?

M: not a specific time. It was the whole thing from the time I got back from the hospital, you know, being so tired and um, so, um, so much responsibility. You go from just having to care for yourself and, um, maintain your your needs and wants to now your whole focus and attention is on somebody else, and everything you do is based upon their needs and their wants. And, um, it changes everything, literally everything.

V: Yeah, some more of like, what your actions and stuff, what you do it it affects your your kid too.

M: Yes, very much. And that's why it was really important for me to make sure that I graduated high school and, um, be able to to get more educated in order for me to provide a stable life for Yeah.

V: And do you think that's what kind of motivated you to as well, to to do better in school, was to provide that future?

M: Yes, absolutely. Because if I didn't have that reasoning, I don't I-I strongly don't believe that I would have finished high school.

V: MHM... Going back to like your childhood? UM Or just reflecting in general, is there any regrets that you had during that time?

M: Regrets? UM There are some regrets, but I don't No, I wouldn't say regrets. I would say there are things that I wish were differently, turned out differently, or that were different from my growing up. Maybe a more stable upbringing, um, being able to, um, stay in one area where I was able to make friends and retain friendships for long periods of time. But that's not a regret of mine, because it it wasn't. It was out of my control. Yeah? I mean, that's, that was completely out of my control. So I do feel that I feel like things would have been a lot different had I stayed safe in the same elementary school all through all those elementary school years, um, and then moved on to middle school with kids from my class, you know, the kindergarten through 5th grade. Yeah, because it, like I said, when you're little and you're in elementary school age, making friends is not hard. It's but it is hard to maintain friendships with those and people when you're so young. And especially times back then were different than now. Now, everybody has a social media you can stay connected with people from far away.. And back then, it wasn't as easy.

(With my mom moving around a lot during her childhood it was difficult to maintain long term relationships with those she met at the new locations she moved to)

V: Um, who would you say, or what would you say was your biggest inspiration while growing up?

M: My biggest inspiration? MHM I'd say my parents, both of them. Um. My mom, being a single mother a majority of my upbringing, UM she worked really, really hard, UM to provide for us. UM There were times where I remember being with a babysitter for almost days on end. And as a kid, you don't look at it as that being great, but looking back at it, it was because she was working so much. She worked a full time job Monday through Friday. She did two separate waitressing jobs during the week and on the weekend, UM, and then in the evening hours. And then, you know, on top of that, she had her own little, UM interior design business. UM That little side hustle for her. UM So watching her work that hard, just to make sure that we had what we needed. UM That that's a huge inspiration. UM, you know, I it also, um confused me as a kid, too, you know, because my mom wasn't always there. And you when you're super young, that's all you really want is you just want to spend time with your your mom and, um, or any paren't. And then, you know, my dad was a very hard working man too, and took great pride in what he did. Um, he would take us to work, like, if he had to work over the weekends, he'd take me and Uncle Brian to work with him, and we'd go, you know, walk around, he give us a little tour, and have us help with little odds and ends and little weird things, and, you know, make us feel like we were doing something, um, just so we could be with him and have a little bonding time. Um, yeah. I mean, I'd say, you know, as a kid, you always look up to your parents, and you always want to grow up and be like them. So I'd say my parents were my biggest inspiration.

V: Do you feel like he saw it as that way, like when you were younger? Or is that something like, reflecting on now, you you feel like they were inspiration, or like, did you kind of like, like, oh, my mom's not home. Like, "she sucks, like, why isn't she home? She never wants to spend time with me?"

M: I think it's both. I mean, there is parts that I saw that were inspiring to me when I was younger, but there is also parts that I-I recognize as an adult. I mean, there's a lot of things that you don't understand as a kid, um, and now as an adult, as a mother myself, and I can now look back at it and see it from a different angle. But like I said, you always, as a kid, you always admire your parents. You think that there would be the best, you know, the strongest, the smartest, the, um, you know, the best, the people that you want to become. And I-I always felt that way, but, um, more more so now as an adult, looking back and looking at what they had to struggle with, what they they didn't always show me, or we didn't always see, you know, when we were little.

V: So, yeah, and kind of talking about, what you said, be becoming an adult and like, looking back and just appreciate and stuff like, you know, as an adult now, that you wouldn't appreciate as a kid. Like, what was something that you, like, your adult self, would tell, like, you're younger self?

M: what would I tell my younger self?

V: Yeah, like, any advice or anything of that nature?

M: You, you won't see it. You won't recognize it now, but you will later. I think that's the biggest advice that I would give myself, which doesn't really, it's not really advice. It's just basically telling myself to be patient. Yeah, um. But that. And I think after losing Grandpa this year, I think one of the biggest advice that I would have for myself is, as a young young kid, is just appreciate everything, and don't take stuff for granted. Because, you know, one example, and it sounds really snobby, but when you're a little kid, you're you always want more. Yeah, grandpa used to take us camping, and he used to take us gold panting. And I absolutely hated gold panting. I thought it was the most boring thing ever. I-I liked camping, but I always thought, why can't we go on real vacations like other people, where they go, stay in hotels and go to Disneyland or go to fun places. Why are we in the woods?

(This part really stuck with me because it reminded me of how as kids we're not always grateful for the things we have in life and we compare our lives to those who have it better than us then appreciating what we already have)

V: Sounds like Bobo. "Why are we in the woods?"

M: You know, with these pans in the river, you know, it's just the stupidest thing ever. But looking back at it, um, that instilled, um, my lifelong love for being outdoors. And loved going camping, and it gave me the confidence to be able to take you guys camping, even when it was just us by ourselves. We didn't have some big strong man with us, you know, um, I was able to feel experience enough to take you guys camping as as little as you guys were, and hopefully instill

your guys as love for being outside and doing outdoor activities. Um, I took that for granted when I was younger, for sure. Because I always was just like, I wanted to go to Disneyland, because all my friends were going to Disneyland. All my friends were going to Six Flags, you know, all my friends were going staying in these hotels and going to the beach. They would go, you know, we're obviously we lived in a nicer area, but, you know, they would go to Mexico, or go to Hawaii, or go, you know, traveling. And, yeah, well, I mean, we went camping. Yeah, we slept in tents on the ground.

V: Um, my next question is kind of, it's kind of similar might be repetitive, but it's, um, well, it would be like a lesson, so not really something like advice, but like a lesson you learn from your childhood that you would want someone else, like younger, like maybe my age?

M: Um, maybe something that I think the biggest life lesson that I can And it's not just for young adults or young kids. It's just be kind, treat everybody the way that you want to be treated. Um, if you see somebody, that's, for instance, you're at school, and you see a kid sitting alone, sit with them. I mean, you don't have to be their best friend, but just talk to him. Maybe that's the highlight of their day that they need. Because you don't know what other people are going through. You don't know what the struggles they have. Um And just something as simple as even saying hi to somebody or just being present for somebody, how much it can impact their life. UM, with me moving so much and being able to make friends easily as a young kid. Once you get to middle school, it gets hard. Kids are mean and, um, some of the schools I went to were predominantly white kids, and I was one of two Asians in the whole middle school. The whole middle school, okay, there was maybe three black students. I don't even remember any Hispanic kids. Um, it was predominantly all white. And, um, once I got to middle school, it got kind of hard making friends, especially when you move so much. Um, and all it took was just one or two people being nice and just um sticking out for you to gain that confidence, for you to actually let your personality show. And then the easiness of, um, making friends after that. So it just everybody needs at least one friend, at least one person to just accept them and just treat other people the way that you would want to be treated. I mean, that's, that's the golden rule.

V: You kind of touched on this earlier, um, in the beginning, but, um, just moments of loneliness and stuff. When have you felt the loneliness?
When have I felt the loneliest?

M: Yeah, as adult and adolescents or just adolescent.

V: Um, we could do both. Um, my loneliness loneliest is growing up. Um, like I said, my mom worked a lot, a lot. Once I got to an age where I didn't need a babysitter. Um, I wasn't quite old enough to be completely self sufficient, but I was old enough to stay home by myself. So, um those years. And our safety measure was was, once you get home from school, you don't go outside, you don't, you don't answer the door for anybody you don't. You know, those are the safety things. You call mom when you get home, and then you just stay there. That was some lonely times that was difficult for me, and I do believe that after a short period of that time, um, is when I started acting out, um behavior wise, and, um, grandma started having some difficult times with me. And then not too long afterwards, when I got shipped off to Grandpa because she couldn't handle

some of the behavior issues with me. But I was definitely rooted in the fact that, um, I was lonely and it was sad, and I struggled without a lot. And it is at no fault to her, because she just did what she could do, the best that she could do. And, um, you know, in her mind, survival, paying the bills. And financially, um, she had to work as much as she did, she wasn't making a whole lot of money. UM, and she didn't have a family support system in Massachusetts. Her being from Korea, majority of her family was all in Korea. All we had was the aunts, and they were clear over here on the West Coast. Um And at that time, my dad had already moved across country to California as well, so she didn't have a support system to rely on. That was the hardest. And as far as adulthood, um, when did I feel the loneliness in adulthood? I'd say the biggest feeling of loneliness was, um, after we lost Grandpa, I think, um, just my mourning. That was a difficult time, and I felt really lonely with that.

V: Yeah, and understandably.....

So how has your childhood, you feel, has impacted your adult life? Um, my childhood has impacted me and my adult life, I would say I am a very independent person. Um, I obviously had to get game at independence at a very young age. Um, I also, and this could be a bad thing, but I can cut ties with people very quickly. Um, if I I'm not okay with the relationship that I maintain with them, I have no remorse with cutting ties with them. And I think that's part of me not having very many long term, um relationships, minus family. But, I mean, friendships and stuff like that. Um, I yeah, I think those are the two. I think that's the biggest impact, is that I-I don't have an issue with severing ties. Um, if it doesn't suit what I need out of a relationship, I don't have that problem.

V: And do you think that ties back to you moving around and not really having, like, the time to, like, just continual a relationship it?

M: It kind of goes back into that yes. And I see that as being negative. It's not a positive I-I don't see it as negative as feeling control of um controlling my peace. So if somebody's betrayed me, or I feel that I'm not getting what I need out of that relationship, I don't think it's negative that I'm able to distance myself from that, but I do feel it's negative that I'm able to just severe ties like completely, and just go about my life like it never that person never existed.

That's not a good quality to have.

(I think it's important when my mom said that she could cut ties with others easier which is a product of her upbringing, that she also mentioned that it is not a good coping mechanism or a way to go about relationships and that she owned up to it and is self aware about it.)

It's not a good, um, coping mechanism either. You know, just, you, yeah, it's, it's not a good thing. Um, the whole independence thing, that's great, you know, you being an independent person, being able to be self sufficient, not feeling the need to rely on anybody or have to get help from people for anything. I-I don't have a problem asking for help. If I know that I need help, I'll ask for help. But I'm also pretty self sufficient.

And part of that was being a single mom too for a little while.

Part of that is um, growing up, having to fend for myself at times. UM And part of that is being alone and knowing that if I didn't do it myself, that it wouldn't get done, you know, stuff like that. Um. But also, there is a flip side to that, because as independent as I am, I don't like doing things by myself. You know that I have a hard time even going and running errands by myself out of fear of loneliness, maybe, and maybe that's how I ended up with four kids, because I was I didn't want you guys to experience that loneliness of an only child, um And you guys don't experience one single inkling of feeling lonely in this house. So I think my job has been accomplished

V: better sweet. But, uh, yeah, and it's kind of like just adding on to that. You already kind of answered it, but I was going to ask if it, do you feel that your childhood has positively or negatively affected your you're adulthood? And you you really kind of touched on this, but there's a little bit more I-I felt like there was more negatives than positive. Is there any more, like, positive, like things that you think affected your childhood?

M: There's no have to be. But, um, I think grandpa's household, um, when I lived with him, I'd say I gained some positives out of that. There's, um, nobody's perfect. They didn't have a perfect marriage, but at the same time, they were married for 38 years when Grandpa passed, and, um, seeing thus stable family life, a marriage, having the the two kids in the house, cats and dogs, just all American, stable, normal household. UM That was a positive that I took from that, because even though I got to see from my mom s side, the single paren't the struggle. Um only child. Um, you know kind of thing. I got to see the flip side when I was at grandpa's too, so, um, I guess the normal sea of their household, um, that was a good impact on my life.

V: Yeah, I like how you said, um, just like being able to see, like, the single mother, like, single child, household, like, you know, very hard working, parents get by and stuff, to, like, the normal, all American, like you said, household, very normal. I-I think that's interesting. I feel like that's also it makes you like you're really good at seeing from different people's viewpoints. And I feel like that also contributed to it, like, it makes it easy to put yourself in other people's shoes, because you you've lived both of those lives. Yeah, um. The next one, um, happiest moment is really simple. Happiest moment in the saddest moment you feel growing up? Yeah, um, it's kind of, it's a little repetitive, kind of similar to probably a previous question, but if there's like a specific moment in your life that you remember being the happiest, and then just, maybe, just despair?

M: happiest, can't pinpoint the happiest time, I would say maybe, um, you know, I remember when I was younger, um, early in the morning, grandpa used to have a paper route before we would, um, he would go to work. And, I mean, I was really young at this time. I was probably, I think this is right after we got back from Germany, um. And he would go out do the paper out. He'd take me, an Uncle Brian, with him. And then when we were done with paper out, we would stop at nana's house, which is my great grandmother's house. And I remember she used to make raisin bread, and we'd go and have a slice or two of raisin bread, and he'd have his coffee, and then he'd go off to work. And then, you know, I would, I don't even probably school or something. I don't even remember exactly where I went, but I remember, um, just the feeling of being at

nana's house and being around family, because, um, east Coast household that they had over there, it was one house, but they ended up subdividing it into, like, three apartments, so three floors and three apartments, and Nana lived in the middle, um, memre and Papa, I think, at the time, lived on the bottom floor, and then one of the ants lived upstairs, so you were there, but you were surrounded by family at all time. And I remember loving that. I love the feeling of having that big Irish Catholic family that you couldn't escape from if you wanted to. Um. And, you know, as far as the saddest moments um, you know, one of the saddest moments that I remember was when Grandma and I wasn't that young. I was older. Grandma's mom had got diagnosed with cancer. So then she was back and forth, over a few year span, back and forth from Korea, um, you know, going and spending some time with her mom and and, um, she was back here in the United States, and she got a call, and it was pretty late at night, probably, like 10:00 at night, and I could just hear my mom crying, just crying, crying, and like, you've heard your grandma cry. She cries, like, wailing, like these big moans. And it was just something like, like an animal was dying or something. And it was so sad, because you know that not nothing you say or do or anything can ease her pain. Um And then at the same time,

I was old enough to understand her pain, not just from losing her mom, but guilt that she had because she was so far away. UM And she didn't get to be with her on her last dying days.

And that's a guilt that any child would carry for the rest of their life when dealing with their parent. And it just made me so sad for her, and I could feel her pain, and, yeah, it sucked.

V: Yeah. Do you think that like, kind of like imprinted on you, or kind of kind of taught you a lesson or anything? Just something you brought from that?

M: Um, I mean, it's the same message you get every time you lose somebody close to you, as as you just don't take things for granted, you don't try not to waste time, um, know that any moment, it could be the last conversation that you have with somebody, the last hug, the last I love you. Um. And I-I think I was old enough to understand that that and to take more out of it than I would have if, say it happened when I was eight, nine or ten years old. You know, eight, 9-10 years old, you just know that you're your mom's hurting, it's sad, and you you're sad, but you wouldn't take a message from that. And, um, being that I was older, I was able to take a lot more from it. UM But also, being a teenager, you don't necessarily listen to everything that you took out of it. So it's easy to take all of that for granted. It really is. And it isn't until you actually experience the direct pain of losing a paren't do you actually realize that how how impactful it is in your life. You know, my grandmother, I wasn't close with because she lived in Korea, and I lived here at that point. I had only met her twice. We didn't speak the same language. We couldn't communicate. So it wasn't somebody close to me, it was somebody that was near and dear to Grandma. And the pain from it was from grandma's pain, not from losing my grandmother. It was from, um, watching my mom go through that pain. A lot of death, we're talking about.

(My mothers perspective about my great grandmother's death was eye-opening, the fact that she could see that being a little bit older made it so she could take in a lesson or learn something from her grandmother's death compared to if she was younger and the death did not teach her as much really shows her ability to see different angles in life.)

V: kind of switching it up. Are there any funny stories or memories, or just people from your life that you'd want to tell me about any Funny or interesting people are just just funny things that happen in your early life that are just like, why?

M: One funny thing that earlier when we were talking about Santa Claus and kids recognizing, so Grandpa used to um work as a side hustle um for the Eagles Club, which was kind of like an elk's lodge um. It was like a membership based lodge kind of thing. And he did, he'd set up for events, and they had a lot of community things going on. And they had a Christmas party. And I was young, and Grandpa played Santa that year, and all the kids went and sat on Santa's lap, told him what they wanted for Christmas, and Santa gave him a present. And, um, you know, I remember going and sitting on Santa's lap, and I looked down and I was like, I know that Watch that watch. My dad has that watch. And then I look up at Santa, I'm like, that's my dad. And I couldn't say anything, because I didn't want to tell Brian, because I didn't want to ruin it for him, even though I knew, I knew that that was my dad

V: I bet he fell for that too.

M: He certainly did, and he was four years older than me, and I didn't want to ruin it for all the other kids, so I just took my present, got off Santa's lap, and from that point forward, I knew that there was no Santa.

V: Yeah, well, that's in just wrapping it up. What do you wish to be remembered for?

M: Um I wanna be remembered for being the best mother in the world. No, I want to be remembered for um, for being compassionate. Um for being one of those people that follows the golden rule, one of those people that um treats others the way that they want to be treated. I want to be known for being hardworking. I want to be known for being understanding um. I just want to be known for being a good person. I don't want to be known for being the strongest, or the richest, or any of that. I the main thing is is, I just want to be, I just wanna be a good person. And, um, yeah, it's something that you need to remind yourself every day and strive for. Because it doesn't come easy. It doesn't. I mean, especially in the world today, is, you UM, it's easy to pass judgment on other people. It's easy to be guarded and try to protect yourself, thinking that everyone's out there to take advantage of you. But that's not the case. And the kinder you are, and the more giving that you are, um what you put out into the world is what you get back. And the more that you practice that, the more that there is out there in the world, and the more impact you can have on other people's lives too, not just your own.

V: Yeah, yeah. I feel like today, it's like way easy to just, like, like you said, just judge people. And just, it's really easy to just, like, yeah, just look on a group of people and like, oh, just, they're like, weird. It's is a really easy to pass judgment.

M: And to live a guarded life, in fear of being hurt or taken advantage of, or somebody else, in fear of other people living, not living in a in the same manner.

You know, we live in a tough city.

We live in a society that's going through a lot right now, and we just have to keep reminding ourselves that it's not gonna get any better.

And if the 1st step doesn't start with us, then who does it start with?

M&V: So, exactly. Exactly. Exactly. All right.

V: Well, thank you for your time. This went just above 40 min All right, thank you for your time.

M: You're welcome anytime.

(I had never spoke this much to my mother about her past before and I remember hugging her after the interview was done. She's a strong independent woman who was raising a family by the time she was my age and I owe everything I have to her. The trials and adversities she faced in life are a direct reflection in her wisdom and knowledge of life when she speaks. I feel a closer bond with her now and I hope that her words impact someone as much as they impacted me.)